

REMARKS

Claims 21, 22 and 27-46 are pending. Claims 21, 22, 27-42 and 44 are cancelled. Accordingly, claims 43, 45 and 46 are at issue.

Initially, applicants by their undersigned attorneys, wish to thank the Examiner for the courtesies extended during the telephone interview conducted on February 11, 2004.

Currently, the substantive rejections of claims 21, 22 and 27-42 as unpatentable over Barényi in view of Föhl are mooted by the cancellation of these claims herein.

Claims 43-46 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 as being indefinite. In the Action, it is asserted that the limitation directed to the “radial extending portion of the integral wall” is confusing as possibly being an attempt to describe the “ledge” of earlier independent claims. In the Interview Summary, additional points of confusion were identified as including the recited gradually varying radius over an arcuate portion of the bowl-shaped element integral wall, and whether the inner end of the radially extending portion actually terminates at the upper end of the recited lower portion, as set forth in proposed amendments to claim 43 earlier discussed with the Examiner.

In an effort to assist the understanding of the subject matter recited in claim 43, included herewith is a marked-up copy of the preferred embodiment shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 in the present application. First, addressing the confusion noted in the Action, claim 43 is amended to clarify that the previously recited “radial extending portion of the integral wall” is as the Examiner surmised essentially the same as the “ledge” of earlier claims so that claim 43 now calls for “a radially extending ledge portion of the element integral wall” to clarify this aspect of claim 43 for the Examiner. As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, the claimed radially extending ledge portion is denoted by reference number 6 and termed a “ledge” in the present application. It is believed that notwithstanding the amendment herein, the terminology characterizing the “ledge” as a “radial extending portion” is simply an alternate way of claiming this aspect of the steering-wheel arrangement and should not have prevented an earlier examination thereof.

The confusion over the limitation directed to the gradually varying radius of the arcuate portion of the integral wall, as previously recited in claim 43 is addressed by deleting this limitation, and amending claim 43 to generally incorporate the limitations of claim 44 therein. In other words, claim 43 now more specifically calls for the previously recited "upper portion of the element" to be "an upper arcuate portion of the element integral wall." This "upper arcuate portion" substantially corresponds to reference number 7 termed an "upper part" in the present application.

Claim 43 further recites a smaller lower portion of the element integral wall corresponding to reference number 5 and termed a "lower part" in the present application. Claim 43 calls for the radially extending ledge portion to include a "radially inner end that terminates at the upper end of the integral wall lower portion." The Interview Summary expresses concern that this not actually in fact the case. However, referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, it can be seen that the ledge portion 6 has a radially inner end designated by letter "X" in FIG. 1 that does indeed terminate at the upper end designated by letter "Y" in FIG. 2 of the smaller lower wall portion 5.

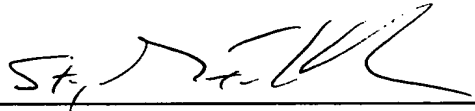
Accordingly, it is submitted that the indefiniteness rejection of claim 43 is overcome, and that the case is now in condition for allowance. Moreover, it is submitted that the subject matter of claim 43 prior to the present amendments was not so unclear as to preclude a meaningful examination thereof. In fact, the amendments with respect to the asserted unclear areas of claim 43 did not add subject matter that was not already present in the previously considered claims. For instance, the radial extending wall portion is amended to simply clarify that it is indeed a ledge portion as surmised by the Examiner in the prior Action. In addition the limitations of presumably already examined and now cancelled claim 44 are generally incorporated into claim 43. This amendment is made to address the concern with respect to the clarity of the location of the arcuate wall portion of the bowl-shaped element integral wall even though the deleted language was by no means inaccurate or unclear as it simply required the gradually varying radius of the wall to be on an arcuate wall portion thereof, although not specifying whether this was along the upper portion, lower portion, or

Application No. 09/681,403
Amendment dated March 3, 2004
Reply to Office Action of December 3, 2003

both. Current claim 43 specifies that at least the upper wall portion is arcuate similar to the subject matter of cancelled dependent claim 44 to put claim 43 in condition for allowance. It is believed that by the present amendments to claim 43, applicants have made every effort to put the claimed subject matter in better form for allowance and that these amendments are not such a material departure from the previously presented and considered subject matter of claim 43 to require further searching and examination thereof.

Based on the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 43, 45 and 46 are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 
Stephen S. Favakeh
Registration No. 36,798

Date: March 3, 2004

FITCH, EVEN, TABIN & FLANNERY
120 South LaSalle, Suite 1600
Chicago, Illinois 60603-3406
Telephone: 312/577-7000
Facsimile: 312/577-7007



Application No. 09/681,403
Applicant: Tore Fosse et al.
APPENDIX

1/2

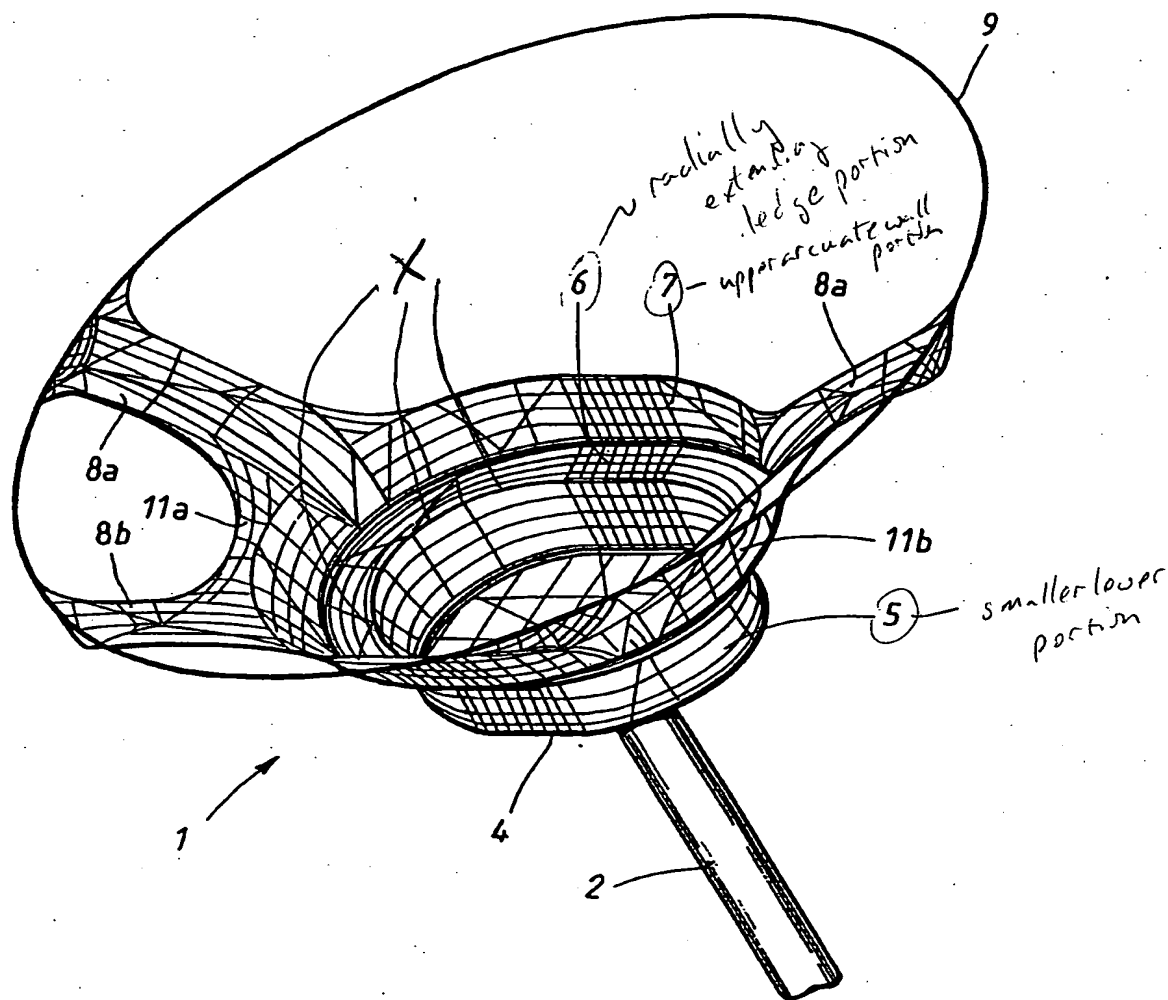


FIG. 1



Application No. 09/681,403
Applicant: Tore Fosse et al.
APPENDIX

2/2

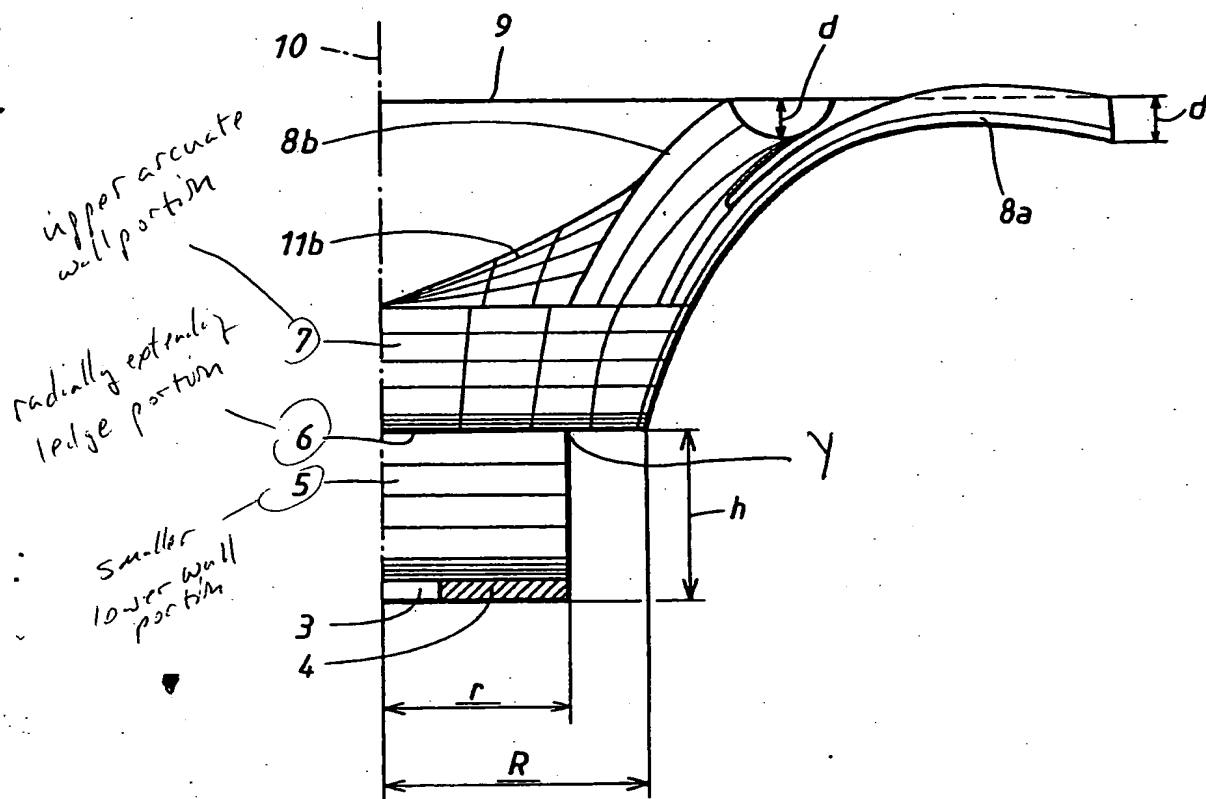


FIG. 2